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United States Attorney
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KANSAS CITY, KANSAS WOMAN CONVICTED IN LARGE CRACK COCAINE CASE AND CO-DEFENDANT SENTENCED

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Sherie Johnson**, 28, Kansas City, Kansas, was convicted on Friday, October 3, 2003, following a four day jury trial to conspiracy to distribute and possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine; distributing crack cocaine; and maintaining a residence on Wood Avenue in Kansas City, Kansas, for the purpose of distributing crack cocaine.

Melgren said that according to trial testimony between 1997 through 2002 Sherie Johnson was involved in a conspiracy to convert two to ten kilos of powder cocaine into crack cocaine for resale in the Kansas City, Kansas area, every two to three weeks.

Sheri Johnson faces a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life in federal prison, without parole, for conspiracy and for distributing crack cocaine and a maximum of twenty years for maintaining a residence for the purpose of distributing crack cocaine.

Melgren said that **Sheri Johnson** was originally charged in January 2003, along with six others, following a six month drug investigation by the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department and the FBI Task Force into the distribution of large quantities of cocaine, which was delivered from Texas, to the Kansas City, Kansas area.

CO-DEFENDANT VAN SPEARS SENTENCED

Melgren also announced that co-defendant **Van Spears**, 39, Kansas City, Kansas, was sentenced on October 6, 2003, by Chief U.S. District Judge John W. Lungstrum to **thirteen years and one month in federal prison, without parole, to be followed by five years of supervised release. The Court ordered the forfeiture of \$10,000,000 including currency, residences, and vehicles.**

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Melgren said that Spears entered a guilty plea on June 4, 2003, to one count of conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute and to distribute five kilograms or more (11 pounds or more) of cocaine, one count of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and one count of forfeiture.

Co-defendant Donald Johnson, Sr., 54, Kansas City, Kansas, father of Sheri Johnson, was convicted on Monday, August 11, 2003, following a five day jury trial of conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute crack cocaine, distributing crack cocaine and possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine. The forfeiture allegation will be decided by the Court prior to sentencing.

Donald Johnson, Sr., faces a minimum of twenty years and a maximum of life in federal prison, without parole, for conspiracy, distributing crack cocaine, and possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine. Sentencing is set for November 3, 2003.

Co-defendant **Victor Sanabria-Adame**, 29, Juarez, Mexico, was sentenced on July 14, 2003, to twenty-four months in federal prison, without parole, to be followed by two years of supervised release, and ordered deported upon completion of his sentence. The Court ordered the forfeiture of \$233,715 in U.S. currency and a Freightliner tractor.

Sanabria-Adame entered a guilty plea on March 31, 2003, to one count of money laundering and one count of forfeiture. Sanabria-Adame admitted at his plea that on December 27, 2002, the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department searched a Freightliner tractor that Sanabria-Adame was driving and found approximately \$233,715 in U.S. currency inside the cab of the truck wrapped in a Christmas package. Sanabria-Adame admitted that truck logs found in the cab listed him as the driver of the truck on trips from Texas to Kansas City on eighteen occasions starting in March 2002. Sanabria-Adame further admitted that he knew the money seized was used to promote an unlawful activity, the distribution of controlled substances. Police also recovered thirty one kilos of powder cocaine hidden in the truck.

Co-defendant **Donald Johnson, Jr.**, 32, Kansas City, Kansas, entered a guilty plea on July 14, 2003, to one count of conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute crack cocaine; two counts of possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine; one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm; and the forfeiture allegation of \$10,000,000.

Johnson, Jr., admitted at his plea that from 1997 through 2002 he purchased between four to eight kilograms (8.8 to 17.6 pounds) of powder cocaine every three weeks and converted it to crack cocaine for resale in the Kansas City, Kansas area.

Johnson, Jr., faces a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life for conspiracy and possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine and a maximum of ten years for being a felon in possession of a firearm. Sentencing is set for October 21, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

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Co-defendant **James Gaskin**, 53, Kansas City, Kansas, entered a guilty plea on July 15, 2003, to one count of distributing fifty grams or more (1.76 ounces) or more of crack cocaine. Gaskin admitted at his plea that on December 10, 2002, he assisted in converting approximately four kilograms (approximately 8.8 pounds) of cocaine into approximately four and a half kilograms (approximately 9.9 pounds) of crack cocaine for resale in the Kansas City, Kansas area. Gaskin faces a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for October 20, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

Co-defendant **Ignacio Murillo** is currently a fugitive after absconding on bond.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department and the FBI in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Terra Morehead in this prosecution.